



Me, Too! Inside Preschool Inclusion

The Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion

Defining types of inclusive programs and services

Many programs across the country are labeled as “inclusive,” but the settings and the services provided in those settings are very different. A child with a disability might spend the entire day with non-disabled peers, or just be included for short segments of the classroom schedule. Programs are generally referred to as “inclusive” regardless of the amount of time spent together or the ratio of children with and without disabilities.

An article by researchers with the Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion examines and labels the range of inclusive programs and services. First, the researchers explore the variety of ways in which inclusive education programs are organized and administered. These include:

- **Community-based Child Care** Children attend nonprofit and for-profit preschools and child care centers located outside of public school buildings. Both the community-based child care and the public school agencies participate in the funding and organization of these programs.
- **Head Start Programs** Children attend programs which Head Start agencies fund and organize.
- **Public School Early Childhood Education** Children attend early childhood and early childhood special education classes in public schools. These programs are operated through public funds.
- **Public School-Head Start Combination** Children attend Head Start classrooms away from or within public school buildings. In these settings, the public school system administers the contract for Head Start services.
- **Public School Child Care** Children attend tuition-based child care programs organized by the public school system.
- **Dual Enrollment** Children divide their days between early childhood education programs and inclusive or nonintegrated special education programs.

Second, the researchers detail the range of inclusive services available to children with disabilities. These include:

- **Itinerant Teaching Model—Direct Service** Services are provided regularly by visiting special education teachers and other service providers in early childhood education settings.
- **Itinerant Teaching Model—Collaborative/Consultative** Special education teachers and service providers consult with early childhood teachers to incorporate individualized goals into the classroom curriculum.

...to engage in informed discussion about inclusion, one must first understand the different forms that exist.

- **Team Teaching Model** Early childhood and special education teachers share teaching roles in the same classroom, collaborating on planning and leading activities.
- **Early Childhood Teacher Model** Early childhood teachers plan, implement, and supervise classroom activities for children with and without disabilities.
- **Early Childhood Special Education** Early childhood special education teachers plan, implement, and supervise classroom activities. Children without disabilities are brought into the classroom.
- **Integrative/Inclusive Activities** Children with and without disabilities attend separate classrooms, but participate in joint activities for a portion of the day.

About ECRII

The Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion (ECRII) is a national research project funded by the U.S. Department of Education for a five-year period to study the inclusion of preschool children with disabilities in settings with typically developing children. The goal of ECRII is to identify factors that help inclusion work, factors that hinder inclusion, and strategies that may support the inclusion of young children with disabilities in classrooms and communities. This comprehensive study of preschool inclusion is being done by researchers at five universities in different regions of the country: San Francisco State University, the University of Maryland, the University of North Carolina, the University of Washington, and Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee.

About this brief

Information provided comes from an in-depth look at inclusion in 16 preschool programs across the country. The programs studied represent urban, suburban, and rural communities, culturally diverse adult and child participants, and many different ways of including young children with disabilities in typical settings. ECRII researchers have tried to describe and learn about inclusion from the viewpoint of the people most involved in it—children with and without disabilities, families, teachers, administrators, and policymakers. Data collection included interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of relevant documents. **This ECRII brief may be freely reproduced and disseminated, provided appropriate reference is given.**

Brief source

Odom, S. L. et al (in press). On the forms of inclusion: Organizational context and individualized service delivery models. *Journal of Early Intervention*.

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